

California Connecting to Collections Project

Applicant: Peninsula Library System

1. Need and rationale.

California is rich with heritage institutions; it has 1,300 museums, 5,000 libraries and archives, 125 historical societies, and over 500 state parks facilities, a total of some 7,000 heritage institutions. Perhaps largely a consequence of distance, more than 800 miles from the northern to southern borders, and a proud history of immigration, California has many medium-small heritage institutions that are its primary keepers of local history, art, and collective memory. (Medium-small heritage institutions made up some 90% of the Heritage Health Index survey responses for the Western region.) These institutions provide rich insight into the particularity of life in different locales and provide residents with a strongly felt sense of place and community. People want to maintain cultural resources in local institutions to have access to the collective memory of their ancestors. Of equal importance, they extensively complement the holdings of the state's major institutions to tell a more comprehensive story of the California experience than could be told by either small or large heritage institutions alone.

California also is disaster-prone with a large number of potential problems: volcanoes, earthquakes, mudslides, tsunamis, mold and insects, floods and fires. The state's museums, libraries, archives, historic sites, and historical societies, and especially those with small collections and even smaller staffs, are at risk because they are isolated by geographic distances, because staff lack appropriate preservation information, because funds are extremely limited, and because there's no readily available source of preservation assistance.

Several surveys have been undertaken in the state that demonstrate a need to address all four recommendations of the Heritage Health Index (HHI):

- provide safe conditions for collections
- develop emergency plans
- assign responsibility for collections care
- marshal public and private support for and raise public awareness about collections care

In addition to the subset of HHI data applicable to the Western states and territories, where 168 of the 458 responses came from California institutions, statewide and Western region needs assessment surveys that have been undertaken include the

- Balboa Art Conservation Center (BACC), 2002, with responses from 93 California museums
- California Association of Museums (CAM), 2005, with responses from 134 California museums, 125 of which have permanent collections
- California State Parks (CSP), 2003, with responses from 99 state parks, representing 473 facilities housing museum collections.
- California State Library (CSL-98), 1998, with responses from 280 California libraries, archives, and historical societies
- California State Library (CSL-91), 1991, with quantitative data from 43 California libraries and archives representing 193 million books and documents
- Society of American Archivists (SAA), 2003, with responses from 500 California archivists

Data from these surveys corroborate the HHI findings for the state:

Provide safe conditions for collections. The CSL-91 data record that 56% of collections need improved storage, from security to fire protection, to environmental control. The HHI data for the region tally 63%. The CSP data indicate that less than 60% of State Park's museum facilities provide safe conditions for the storage of objects. All the surveys called out an interest in education on preservation topics that would lead to safer conditions for collections.

Develop emergency plans. HHI data for the region indicate that 56% of heritage institutions lack an emergency plan. The CSP survey discovered that less than 10% of its museum facilities have a collections' emergency plan. The CSL-98 survey indicated that 68% of libraries lacked a plan. Different parts of the heritage community indicate different levels of disaster preparedness, but clearly all parts of the community need considerable help to achieve comprehensive readiness. Demand for training in disaster preparedness also is common among the surveys: 43% of the BACC responses asked for disaster prep training; the CSL-98 survey, 42%; and the CSL-91 survey, 43%.

Assign responsibility for collections care. HHI regional data indicated that 20% of institutions lacked a staff member assigned to collection care. The CSL-98 survey indicated 68% of institutions lack a full- or part-time member assigned to conservation/preservation. However, the need for education in collection care is high. The BACC survey indicated that 60% of the responses expressed a need for education in preservation assessment and planning; the SAA survey indicated that 38% wanted preservation training; the CSL-91 data indicated need among 42% of institutions; and the CAM survey revealed that 90% of California museums are interested in collection-related professional development.

Marshal public and private support for and raise public awareness about collections care. Lack of resources often is cited as a major reason for inadequate care of collections. The CSL-98 survey found it the most prominent issue, along with lack of staff and appropriate knowledge. The BACC survey also pointed to staff and money, though in this case lack of staff was the largest impediment at 75%, closely followed by lack of funds at 68% and lack of appropriate knowledge at 30%. Further, the BACC survey found that only 40% of responders undertake collection care with funds from the operating budget, only a dismal 15% have received grants for collections care, and only 10% have endowment funding. Nonetheless, interest in education and training in fundraising and outreach is high. The BACC survey found that 50% want training in grantwriting; 27% of the California archivists in the SAA survey requested training in grants and fundraising; 93% of California museums, according to the CAM survey, are interested in fundraising professional development programs (representing a 45 percent increase since 1998); and the CSL-98 survey found that 31% wanted assistance with grantwriting.

While the geographic coverage and type of institutions varied among these surveys leading up to the comprehensive Heritage Health Index in 2005, the message is clear and consistent for California.

1. Most institutions are medium to small, which correlates with a lack of preservation knowledge among staff and a lack of resources with which to provide safe conditions for collections.
2. More than half of California's heritage institutions are unprepared for disaster, and a third (as reported in one survey) have experienced disasters affecting the collections in the last five years.
3. While staffing issues are a major reason among small institutions for not having assigned a staff member to collections care, the demand for education and training in care of collections is high,

suggesting that staff might use in-service preservation education and training opportunities as a precursor to a staff assignment.

4. Public awareness of the need for collections care, and willingness to fund it, remains low. Collections care is not a high priority among governing bodies of heritage institutions, as demonstrated by the BACC finding that less than half of the institutions surveyed fund conservation and preservation from the operating budget. Moreover, fundraising for collections care is nearly unknown, leaving a major need, and opportunity, to provide institutions with tools to marshal public and private support.

The need for collections care is well documented for California; it's time to act on an insight offered by Lawrence Reger, President of Heritage Preservation, in the HHI report, "...public collections reflect the shared memories and aspirations of the nation, and must be guarded."

2. The Planning Process

The goals of the California Connecting to Collections Project are to:

1. create a shared vision for preservation among heritage institutions in California and
2. develop a statewide implementation plan to achieve the recommendations spelled out in the HHI (as described above).

Toward those goals, the first objective will be to **(Objective 1) host two, full-day, in-person regional meetings for representatives of regional and statewide organizations of heritage professionals**. Two meetings, one each in the northern and southern parts of the State with the content and process the same for both--will be needed because of the size and diversity of California. An estimated 100 participants representing more than a dozen heritage organizations will participate. (See "Invited Participants" optional attachment for the starting list of organizations to be invited to participate.) Further, by locating meetings regionally, participants will contribute their travel expenses to attend the meetings.

A combination of plenary sessions and breakout group discussions is anticipated. The plenary sessions will be used to introduce topics and clarify prepared documents; breakout sessions will be used to discuss issues and possible actions, with reports from the breakout groups to all the participants.

The Project has five partners, California Association of Museums, California Preservation Program (of the Peninsula Library System), California State Library, California State Parks, and Historic Monterey (a multi-agency collaborative organization). The partners were selected to capture the multiple perspectives of several statewide and regional agencies to inform the statewide preservation planning process. Each partner will provide one or two staff members to serve on a Project Work Group (PWG), contributing at least 8 days per person. The PWG will be responsible for siting and scheduling the regional meetings, identifying and inviting heritage organizations to participate, designing the content and process for the meetings, creating and compiling needed documents, and gathering input on draft plans at annual meetings of California heritage organization professionals.

Following the meetings, the PWG will be responsible for compiling meeting results and developing **(Objective 2) a draft plan for a statewide preservation program**. The draft plan will consist of two parts: a shared vision for a program to assist California heritage organizations implement actions to achieve the four recommendations of the HHI, and a development plan, including organizational infrastructure and funding, to provide the education, training and assistance needed by heritage institutions to achieve these

goals. Discussions at the regional meetings may generate additional, related preservation aspirations; these will be folded into revisions of the statewide implementation plan.

Objective 3 will be a series of feedback sessions at annual meetings of California heritage professionals on the draft plan. Members of the PWG will attend annual meetings they otherwise ordinarily would attend, schedule and advertise the meetings, facilitate the meetings to receive feedback, and compile the responses.

The fourth and final objective will be **(Objective 4) to assess the feasibility of the draft plan by soliciting feedback from potential funders and supporters.** Comments from the feedback sessions will contribute to the Project evaluation. A frank assessment of the feasibility of the funding plan from the perspectives of the administrations of the Project partners will form another element of the evaluation. Other perspectives will be solicited from California funding organizations and key elected officials and state policymakers whose support could be integral to plan implementation.

A formal outcomes-based evaluation will be undertaken in addition to determining the acceptance of the statewide plan in Objective 4. Two surveys will be administered to the participants in the regional meetings to assess changes in their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors as a consequence of the Project. The first survey will be administered before the regional meetings to assess participants' current state of thinking, and the second toward the end of the Project after community review of the draft statewide plan.

The value of the Project implementation plan lies not only in its broad acceptance by the community of heritage institutions, but also in its ability to achieve long term results and benefits beyond the grant period. California has several means to help ensure results and benefits:

- A statewide preservation training infrastructure already is in place; the California Preservation Program, the Western Archives Institute (managed by the California State Archives), and Infopeople (a statewide library training organization) all have the communication and advertising vehicles, the staffing, and the technology to help meet California Connecting to Collections goals.
- California already has successful collaborative multi-agency organizations working together to enhance their preservation effectiveness. Historic Monterey and several regional disaster mutual aid networks (e.g., San Diego/Imperial County Libraries Disaster Network and the Bay Area Mutual Aid Network) can be studied for possible replication or adaptation to other California communities and regions.
- California provides leadership in multi-state preservation services, e.g., the Western States and Territories Preservation Assistance Service and the multi-state field services program of the Balboa Art Conservation Center, thus broadening the base of support for regional preservation services and extending their reach to states with too few heritage institutions to support a statewide service of their own.
- California has statewide organizations, representing most, if not all, segments of the community of heritage organizations, that maintain ongoing communication with members and undertake educational programming on behalf of their constituents: the California Association of Museums, the California Library Association, the California Association of Research Libraries, the Society of California Archivists, the California Historical Society, the California Council for the Promotion of History, the California Preservation Foundation, the California State Parks, and the California Preservation Program, as well as other smaller organizations. All of these organizations will be

invited to participate in the planning and implementation of a statewide multi-agency preservation program.

3. Project resources: Budget and Personnel

The Project Work Group is central to the success of the project. Its eight members will contribute at least eight days each, providing strong guidance and partial project staffing. Five meetings, three in-person and at least two by telephone (with prep, a total of 4-6 days); two days of attendance at regional meetings; plus two days attendance at annual meetings of heritage professionals to staff feedback sessions; a total of at least eight days/member. To cover travel to planning and regional meetings, \$13,018 has been budgeted.

Collectively, the Project Work Group brings a great deal of expertise and experience in preservation, planning, and organization development to the Project. Kim Bui-Burton is Director of the Monterey Public Library and Chair of the Historic Monterey collaborative; Dennis Copeland is Monterey Public Library Archivist and Chair of the Historic Monterey Cultural Historic Stewardship project; Jim DeMersman is Director of the Hayward Area Historical Society and Museums, President of the California Association of Museums, and a Board member of the Western Museums Association; Celeste DeWald is Executive Director of the California Association of Museums and has a background in museum administration and education; Wendy Franklin is Manager of Museum Services at California State Parks and an experienced house museum curator; Susan Hanks is Library Programs Consultant with the Library Development Bureau of the California State Library and the State Library's consultant to the California Preservation Program; Barclay Ogden is Head of the UC Berkeley Library Preservation Department and Co-Chair of the California Preservation Program; Julie Page is Co-Chair of the California Preservation Program and User Services Coordinator of the Western States and Territories Preservation Assistance Service.

Major Project plan development and writing assignments from the Project Work Group will be directed to Barclay Ogden: compilation of data, draft documents for the regional meetings, follow up drafts of implementation plans, development of an evaluation instrument, and Project reports, have been budgeted at 12 days beyond days contributed to the Project as a member of the Project Work Group.

Meeting planning and logistics, invitations and participant registration, duplication and mailing of Project materials, and Project evaluation, an estimated 12-15 days of work, will be assigned to Christine Bennett, CAM Program Coordinator. A temporary office assistant position has been budgeted to backfill for duties Christine will have to set aside to accomplish Project work.

The Project budget has allocated \$8,488 for services at regional meetings and for supplies and materials: printing and copying, mailings, facilities rentals, audiovisual requirements, regional meeting refreshments and a working lunch for participants. A facilitator will be contributed by the California State Library for the regional meetings to enable the Project Work Group members to fully participate in the content discussions.

The Peninsula Library System (PLS) will serve as fiscal administrator; \$3,900 has been budgeted to partially cover direct expenses for staff. Indirect charges will be contributed. The PLS also serves as fiscal administrator for the California Preservation Program, which enjoys both LSTA and NEH grant funding, so the PLS is well versed in federal reporting requirements.